



Decision Notice
Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex Shooting Range Grant
September 30, 2011

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) released a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) on July 19, 2011 for the Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex to provide \$25,676.88 in partial funding towards the construction of a 1000 yard shooting range.

For the benefit of interested parties, the following summary provides additional information about the proposal and the public comments received.

Background

The Shooting Sports Complex is located three miles north of Great Falls, Montana. Range complex is located off of Ryan Dam Road. Formerly the Beckman property with Black Horse Butte on north edge of the property, but known locally as Radio Tower Hill from the microwave relay towers on top. The complex is 942.37 acres, 582.37 are owned by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) Township 21 North, Range 4 East, M.P.M. Section 15: NW $\frac{1}{4}$; Section 16: NE $\frac{1}{4}$, E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and the remaining 360 acres are owned by GFSSC at Township 21 North, Range 4 East, M.P.M. Section 15: NE $\frac{1}{4}$; Section 16: SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$.

The Draft EA was posted on FWP's website July 19 through August 5th. A news release was distributed on July from FWP's Great Falls office and the comment period was announced in the Great Falls Tribune on July 21, 2011.

Summary of Public Comments

FWP received two comments on this project:

"I thought the land located north of Great Falls was to be open to the general public as a shooting range ! The FWP makes it out be pay to the general public! They have had the land since 2003 & have not done one thing for the general public except farm it out to all the shooting clubs in Great Falls ! They have money to help all of them out to build whatever they need & then they turn around & charge John public fees to shoot! It just doesn't seem right to me!"

The other comment was from a phone message that asked why this range isn't run like the Havre Rifle Range that is also located on FWP property.

FWP response: FWP provides private shooting range clubs with grants state-wide. The following legislation defines who is eligible to receive a shooting range grant- the **purpose of [MCA] [87-1-277](#) through [87-1-279](#) and this section is to create a continuing program and mechanism to provide funding, through the department, to private shooting clubs, private organizations, local governments, and school districts for the establishment and improvement of a system of shooting ranges throughout Montana.**

GFSSC Inc is eligible to receive grant funding and FWP is authorized to grant this request according to Montana Code (87-1-277), which allows private ranges to apply for grants under the following conditions:

(4) To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:

- (a) (i) shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license and who pays club or organization membership fees;*
- (ii) may not limit the number of members;*
- (iii) may charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and*
- (iv) shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or*
- (b) shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.*

GFSSC Inc fulfills the requirements of 4 (a).

FWP has shooting ranges on state properties in Missoula, Hamilton, Great Falls, and Glendive. All but Glendive are operated through contractual agreements with local private shooting range clubs who require the public to purchase a annual membership, range use permit, or day use pass to use the range. All have limited free sight in days.

The comment regarding the Great Falls Shooting Range and the Hill County Rookery Shooting Range, located NW of Havre is a bit confusing as to what the commenter actually was comparing. The Havre (Hill County Shooting Range) sits on property that is leased to Hill County by FWP who in turns subleases it to the Havre Rod and Gun Club to operate as a shooting range. The Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex is operated by an organization comprised of representatives from local sportsmen's groups (GFSSC.Inc) who lease FWP's 582.37 acres for the purpose of a shooting range. Both ranges are required to carry liability insurance and GFSSC, Inc. has a locked gate to prevent vandalism but also for compliance with their insurance policy that requires the club to have a member or a range safety officer present when a non-member uses the range. The Havre range does not have a locked gate and members can shoot daily from daylight to dark; however, both ranges require an annual membership fee or annual permit

(Great Falls \$50 and Havre \$15) for individuals to use the range and both ranges offer site-in days when the public can shoot free. Both ranges have covered shooting stations and GFSSC public range allows shooters up to 200 yard targets and the Havre range has shooting distances of up to 1,000 yards.

Based on these public comments and internal review, the Draft EA will be adopted as the Final EA. This Decision Notice and the Final EA will serve as the final documents pertaining to this action. Funding for this project will be granted by FWP pending the completion of other administrative requirements by the GFSSC. Inc. as required by the Shooting Range Development Program.

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